



Montgomery County Council

From the Office of Councilmember Howard Denis

For Immediate Release

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**Bethesda Library News Conference Statement
By Councilmember Howard A. Denis**

Monday, January 13, 2003 - 10:00am

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I am pleased to announce that I will be introducing legislation tomorrow to appropriate \$168,000 in order for the Bethesda Library to open as promised by this sign. I thank Council Vice President Steve Silverman for co-sponsoring this measure with me. A hearing before the Council has been set for January 21, and a committee worksession for February 3.

It simply makes no sense for this newly renovated library to sit unused when work is completed this spring. That would amount to closing a public building. There is a security risk involved in protecting a new vacant public building. That in itself would require money, perhaps as much as reopening on schedule. As it is the Library has been closed for 13 months.

This is a Regional Library in walking distance of Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School, Bethesda Elementary School, and is adjacent to the Bethesda Central Business District. This Library had foot traffic of around 215 people each HOUR it was open, over 650,000 trips each year. It was the second busiest library in the system.

The Council and the community were assured last year that when it was time for the library to reopen that an appropriation would be forthcoming. My legislation fulfills that promise.

The Bethesda Library sits between Bethesda Elementary School and Caroline Freeland Park. It's as basic as 1-2-3: school, library, park. A good library is as important to a community as quality schools and parkland. It is part of the

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continuum of services that the county provides, services that have a high level of public support, services that make people more supportive of the credibility of County government and the tax burden which must be borne.

The residents here pay taxes to support the library and, indeed, pay taxes for services in other parts of the county.

Local residents here are being re-routed to the Davis Library on Democracy Boulevard, a burden on that facility which creates even more traffic.

We all know that this is a challenging budget year. There will be plenty of opportunities to say no. Those decisions will be made easier for public officials to take and for citizens to support if we say yes to keeping our basic promises when a relatively modest amount is involved.

I am not interested in symbolism here -- I am interested in reality, facts, and fairness. This is not the new jail we are talking about, or Soccerplex, or Black Rock -- controversial projects that may require additional millions to maintain. Surely this great County can find \$168,000 to keep its promise to the hundreds of thousands of Bethesda Library users.

I have shown in the State Senate and on the Council that I am prepared to make tough decisions. I've bitten many a bullet. So I believe I have credibility in asking for fairness here, to have a promise kept, one that is basically pocket change for the County in its multi-billion dollar budget.

Down Arlington Road is a wonderful new Giant Supermarket. I cut the ribbon last month. This Public Library is more important to the community than the new supermarket.

Down Bethesda Avenue is the Barnes and Noble Bookstore. This Public Library is more important to the community than that great bookstore. Why? Because many residents suddenly have less money to buy books.

Parents have less money to buy children's books. They need this Library to open on time.

Retired people are finding it harder to make ends meet, what with rising property assessments. They need this library to open on time.

Those seeking to acquire English- language skills need for this library to open on time.

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Small businesspeople seeking information about starting and maintaining their enterprise need for this library to open on time.

And students doing research need for this library to open on time.

This is not pork. It's bread and butter. I look forward to working with my colleagues and the Executive in order to help Montgomery County live up to its commitment with regard to re-opening the Bethesda Library.

I want this sign, which bears the reputation and imprimatur of the County, to be truthful. This sign says the library is to open this spring. The sign looks like it is falling down. I hope that's not a bad omen. I don't want this sign to be like the signs on Muncaster Mill Road which say that there is an ICC study underway, when there hasn't been for 4 years. That's my concern. If we let the schedule slip once we are damaging the credibility of the County in the eyes of the people, making it even more difficult to pass a balanced budget that is fair.

Thank you.

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